

ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever™

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services



From the DCFS Director

Bryan Samuels

I ended 2003 by traveling the state to see first hand how the department is coming through on our mission to serve children and families. I met many dedicated foster and adoptive parents who are working hard to take care of children with intense needs. In many cases you are doing so with limited resources and support. I can promise you that the department will not take your assistance for granted.

In 2004, I will continue to focus my staff and the private agencies on what children need to prepare them for life with a family and after they leave the care of the state as adults. The first major area to which I will commit resources is the Integrated Assessment Program to determine a child's developmental, emotional, physical and educational needs when he or she enters care. Secondly, I have directed more resources for education. I believe that encouraging educational achievement is necessary for successful transitions to adulthood. I also believe that if we do a good job of identifying a child's needs and providing services, then we will see more stable and successful placements. After that, there is no telling how far you and the children you care for will be able to go.

Free tax booklet helps foster and adoptive parents

Once again it's time for taxes. DCFS and the Center for Economic Progress continue to work together to provide foster and adoptive families with timely information to help them in preparing their tax returns. Each January, the Center for Economic Progress mails the *Tax Booklet for Foster and Adoptive Parents* to families with foster and adopted children to help them obtain all federal and state tax benefits and credits for which they might be eligible.

The Center for Economic Progress also tracks changes to the tax laws that are pertinent to these families. For example, beginning in 2003, parents who adopt a special needs child can receive the full \$10,160 adoption tax credit, even if actual expenses are less. The credit can be carried forward for five years. Also, the Child Tax Credit has been increased from \$600 to \$1,000 per child. Foster parents often qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit, which can be over \$4,000, and the Child Tax Credit. The tax booklet has more details.

The Center for Economic Progress also continues to provide free tax preparation to families with income under \$35,000 at 28 sites located throughout Illinois. The booklet provides the addresses of these sites and other services for which foster and adoptive parents may be eligible such as free legal tax representation in cases of tax controversies with the IRS and the Illinois Department of Revenue.

For more information on any items in the booklet including the free tax preparation sites, tax representation or any other question pertaining to tax issues for foster and adoptive parents, please call the Center for Economic Progress at 312-252-0280.

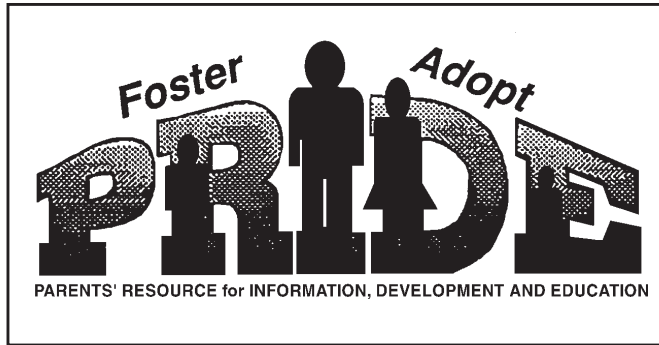
DCFS updates foster parent training

In January, the DCFS Office of Training Services and Workforce Development began offering an updated version of the Foster PRIDE/Adopt PRIDE Pre-Service curricu-

lum. Some of the major changes in the curriculum include how important a positive relationship with the birth parents is in keeping families intact. A new video, "Family Forever," which portrays foster families and birth families working together towards reunification is shown in Session Two. A new resource called "Bridging the Gap Between Resource Families and Birth Families," developed by the Casey Foundation has also been added.

The curriculum also puts more emphasis on the need to develop and promote children's cultural identities. Several references to this have been interwoven throughout the curriculum. Additionally, more focus is given to adolescents' feelings about placement changes and the impact they have on youth. More information about trauma and how it affects attachment, behavior and development of children has also been added to the curriculum.

The Foster/Adopt PRIDE program was developed for the pre-service training, assessment and selection of prospective foster and



adoptive resource families. The curriculum has become a standard for the nation. The Child Welfare League of America worked with DCFS on the revisions and led the DCFS Master Trainers through activities to practice and master the curriculum changes. The Master Trainers in turn trained the staff at each of the local training programs statewide.

Jean Maher, PRIDE Program Manager, Office of Training and Development, said Pre-Service classes reflecting these recent curriculum revisions started in January 2004 through the eight College/University Foster Parent Training Programs located statewide. Plans are in progress to offer a workshop at the March DCFS Caregivers Conference for foster parents who are already licensed to provide them with more detailed information on the revisions. Foster Parent Training Credit will be available to those who attend the update sessions.

Questions about the class schedule can be addressed by the local college/university listed on the last page of this newsletter's regional section.

Teenagers Are Amazing!

*Teenagers are amazing.
I wish the world would see
Just how beautiful we are
And how compassionate we
can be.*

*I wish they could take back
All the cynical things they've
said
See how much we shine
And be positive instead.*

*Remark on our radiant smiles
And the difference that we
make.
Remark on the people that
our lives touch
And the chances we have to
take.*

*Notice how we change
Each and every day
Wanting to leave childhood
Yet desperately wanting to
stay.*

*I wish you would remember
How tough our lives can be.
Promises that are broken.
The violence that we see.*

*Yet still we venture forward
Unsure of where roads may
lead.
We're hoping that you'll
notice,
Hoping you'll take heed—*

*Of the changes that we've
made,
Of the power that we hold,
Of the wisdom we possess,
Of our stories yet untold.*

-By James W.

Crossroads booklet helps families prepare for college costs

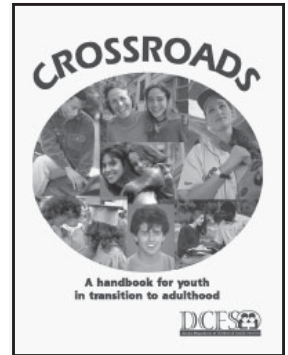
The financial aid picture is fairly complicated, however there are several resources to help. The Crossroads booklet, which is mailed to youth on their 15th birthday, includes an explanation of financial aid and tips to help youth and their families apply for funds to use for education.

All assistance based on financial need requires filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). When it comes to youth in foster care or guardianship families, the major determin-

ing factor is the student's status as dependent or independent. The FAFSA will ask if the applicant is currently a ward of the court or if the applicant was a ward until age 18. Youth in foster care or guardianship should answer YES. Youth who were adopted before age 18 must answer NO. A YES answer will consider the youth to be an independent student, which means their parent's income will not be included in the financial need formula. Adoptive parents' income will be included, unless

special circumstances apply.

After filling out and returning the application, the student will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR) that lists the Expected Family Contribution (EFC). More information can be found in Crossroads (CFS 1050-71).



DCFS offers several ways to help pay for college education

DCFS Scholarships

DCFS annually provides 48 college scholarships to youth who are currently under guardianship of the department or who have left department guardianship through adoption or private guardianship arrangements. Scholarship recipients receive up to four consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state colleges or universities, a monthly stipend and a medical card. The purpose of the program is to ensure that those selected have the opportunity to earn a bachelors degree in four years or less. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Scholarship Program Student Applications (CFS 438) are routinely due March 31 and award announcements occur by mid-May.

Community College Tuition Assistance

DCFS, via a contract with the Illinois Community College Board, will pay the tuition for youth in care who attend an Illinois community college when tuition cannot be covered through the Free Application for Federal Student aid (FAFSA) process. DCFS youth are eligible to utilize four semesters of tuition payments. Under this contract, community colleges can provide other supportive services necessary to ensure a successful education experience for the student. Such services may include: career selection, financial aid advising, placement services, and tutoring. For more information about the DCFS scholarship or the Community College Program, contact Dwight Lambert, Statewide Education Coordinator at 217-524-2030.

Financial aid advice

Education Advisors and Liaisons are available in each region to work with youth ages 15-20. The advisors are available to discuss financial aid and assist with developing educational plans. Contact the Education Advisor in in your region for educational support for DCFS-supervised cases or the Education Liaison designated by your private agency.

Funds for books

Youth who participate in the DCFS Youth in College or Youth in Scholarship programs (YIC or YIS), also qualify for the Book Reimbursement Program, if books are not covered by financial aid. Contact Deborah Flowers at 309-693-5150 for information. Other college students should discuss with their caseworker possible assistance with books per DCFS payment procedures for educational expenses.

Teens prepare for adulthood with Life Skills Training

Even though most teens might think they are ready for life on their own right now, many could use some extra preparation and instruction. The Office of Education and Transition Services provides Life Skills Training for all youth ages 14 to 21, while they are in foster care. Several agencies around the state have contracts for 12-week sessions to teach youth about topics such as money management, conflict resolution, health and safety in the home, and nutrition. Young people who successfully complete the course typically receive a \$150 bonus they can use to practice their newly honed budgeting skills or start a savings account.

“It is important that the foster parents encourage young people to take advantage of these classes. They are a great way to get ready for life as an adult, plus the teens have fun and get a chance to meet other young people,” said Holly Bitner, Cook County Transition Manager.

At Latino Youth Services on Chicago’s West Side, the youth in the group showed off their skills by hosting a holiday party that they planned, budgeted and catered themselves. The activities may differ among providers, but the goal to help youth mature and become self-sufficient is the same no matter where they live. Downstate, in addition to the agency providers, several community colleges offer life skills

training, which has the added bonus of exposing youth to college life. Additionally, the DCFS regions and Transition Services staff are actively recruiting more providers, particularly in the southern-most part of the state.

To begin the life skills training, a youth must participate in a life skills assessment and have it scored with a caseworker. The foster parent also provides input to the assessment to help identify a youth’s current strengths and needs. Assessments are typically done at age 14 and 16, and before closing a youth’s case. The assessment will be the basis of the service plan and selection of the right setting and type of life skills training for each participant. The caseworker must submit the assessment, current service plan, current social background, appropriate consent, and the Transitional Services Referral Form (CFS 917), to the Education and Transition Services office.

There are many programs available and most have openings so it should not take much time for a young person to get started. Many agencies provide assistance with transportation if it is needed and provide snacks for each class. To find a life skills program suitable for a youth in care, contact the caseworker or Holly Bitner in Cook County (312-814-5959) or Johnny Williams (217-524-2027) for information on downstate programs.

Management Spotlight: Cynthia Moreno

**Deputy Director,
Service Intervention**



Since her appointment last summer, Cynthia Moreno, Deputy Director for Service Intervention, has focused more resources on the Office of Education and Transition Services. That office has the primary mission to provide comprehensive educational services for all DCFS youth, ensure services for youth transitioning into adulthood, and satisfy the special needs of pregnant and parenting teens.

Dr. Sharon Latiker, Associate Deputy Director, is coordinating the activities of the Office. New this year are initiatives to work more closely with the public school system and caregivers to ensure DCFS students are at proper grade level. The Eighth Grade/High School Freshman initiative is designed to help eighth graders transition well to high school. The department and the Chicago Public Schools also assisted eighth graders in applying for Chicago’s selective enrollment schools.

The staff of the Office of Education and Transition Services is dedicated to helping youth, their caregivers and caseworkers find solutions as young people prepare for adulthood. Questions about services and resources can be directed to 312-814-5959.

DCFS can help with housing for young adults

The DCFS Youth Housing Assistance Program provides housing advocacy services and cash assistance to youth approaching emancipation or who have been emancipated.



The housing advocacy services include:

- Assistance in securing affordable housing
- Consumer education and budget counseling
- Connections to community resources for help with utilities, clothing and food
- Follow-up services for at least three months after securing appropriate housing

Cash assistance to avoid a potential housing crisis may also be authorized for:

- Housing security deposits
- Rent when the client cannot make the payment
- Partial housing subsidy (under particular circumstances)
- Beds for the client or the client's children
- Current utility bills or deposits
- Appliances
- Other items required by the client to avoid or manage a crisis

In general, these programs are open to young people between the ages of 17 and 21 who are approaching emancipation or were formerly in the care of the state. They must be homeless or in significant danger of becoming homeless without the assistance. Youth must also have some income or potential income to meet rent and utility costs after receiving assistance. Youth who have moved from DCFS care to adoption or guardianship after their 14th birthday are eligible for Housing Advocacy, but not cash assistance.

For specific eligibility requirements or additional information, contact Ted Ernst, Youth Housing Assistance Coordinator at 312-814-5571 or ternst@idcfs.state.il.us.

Getting youth ready for work

Employment helps prepare youth for self-sufficiency and independence. It also provides opportunities for career discovery and builds self-confidence.

DCFS youth have many resources available to ensure they are ready to enter the job market and earn a living wage. The Office of Education and Transition Services is responsible for making sure youth have opportunities for employment and training. John Kasper, Statewide Youth Employment Coordinator, works with agencies and employers who can help youth find jobs and training for careers.

For young people still in care between the ages of 14 and 21, the Office can help with:

- Job readiness and preparation
- Interviewing
- Work maturity skills
- Completing applications
- Resume writing
- Career counseling
- Money management
- On-the-job training
- Job search training and job placement
- Career exploration

“Even when the general market seems tight, there are many programs, specifically designed for DCFS youth. It is important that their caregivers and caseworkers are aware of and go after the employment help that is available,” said Kasper.

There are several programs offered by private agencies in Cook county (see Cook Advocate section on page 5 of this issue), along with the Illinois Employment and Training Centers located in nearly 100 offices around the state. The local IETC is a good place to start. They can refer youth to local employers as well as government-funded employment programs.

For more information on employment resources, caregivers, caseworkers and youth can contact John Kasper at 312-814-5959.



System of Care: support for children in foster care

In July 2002, the department implemented a statewide Children's Mental Health System of Care (SOC) to provide community-based services aimed at helping foster families and the children in their care. The program's goal is to improve foster care stability and to reduce placement disruptions through a combination of crisis intervention services, flexible funding and intensive clinical support.

The SOC providers are charged with coordinating comprehensive services for children in traditional and relative caregiver foster homes and for children in the home of their parents who are stepping-down from a group home or institution. All services are agreed upon by a family team in which caretakers are encouraged to have an active voice about the strengths and needs of their child. The SOC program does not change or replace the responsibilities of the case manager but is intended to provide additional services when more placement support is needed than is available through the case management agency.

SOC services may be accessed in either a crisis or non-crisis situation. If a crisis occurs and the case manager (or emergency contact) is not available, foster parents may call the Crisis and Referral Line at 1-800-345-9049. The Crisis and Referral Line will also try to contact the case management agency, but, if unsuccessful, will refer the call to

the appropriate SOC agency. The SOC agency will contact the caller by phone within one hour and if necessary provide on-site intervention services within four hours. SOC crisis services are, in addition to the psychiatric crisis services, available through Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS) agencies—also accessed at 1-800-345-9049.

If a child's behavioral/emotional issues begin to threaten the stability of a home, the caseworker should be immediately notified. If the caregiver and the caseworker decide that a referral to SOC services is appropriate, the caseworker is responsible for contacting the appropriate SOC agency. Once the SOC agency accepts the referral, they will provide consultation on community services that may be available to the caregiver and/or schedule a family team meeting to begin assessing the strengths and needs of the child and family. If there are immediate issues that threaten the stability of the placement, the SOC agency may provide the service before convening a full family team meeting.

To ensure timely and relevant services, satisfaction surveys will be distributed twice per year. The surveys are confidential and will be distributed by the SOC agency but returned to an independent location.

If you have questions about the System of Care, please call Jane Hastings at 312-814-6805.

Foster parent appreciation essay contest

Have you ever wanted to let others know how good your foster parent has been to you? Well, here is your chance to...**TELL US ABOUT YOUR FOSTER PARENT!**

In a one-page essay, please tell us how your foster parent has inspired, encouraged, helped you, or even changed your life.

Contest Rules - Child must be:

1. 10 years of age or older
2. In the care of DCFS and reside in the home of an Illinois foster parent.
3. Enrolled in and attending school.
4. Able to **independently** form sentences.
5. Child's name, address, age, grade level and school name must be written in the top left corner of the essay.
6. Entries may be mailed, faxed or e-mailed to the address below and must be received by April 2.

IDCFS, Office of External Affairs
Director of Special Projects
10 W. 35th Street, 2nd Floor
Chicago, IL 60616
Fax: 312-328-2097
E-mail: dwalton@idcfs.state.il.us

The contest winner will be recognized and his or her foster parent will receive a Foster Parent Appreciation Award during the May celebration of Foster Parent Appreciation Month.

The winning essay will be framed and displayed in the office of DCFS Director Bryan Samuels. A framed copy of the winning essay will also be delivered to Governor Rod R. Blagojevich. Your foster parent will be notified if they are selected to receive the Foster Parent Appreciation Award.

Illinois wins three national Adoption Excellence Awards

Three Illinois programs/families received the 2003 Adoption Excellence Award from the United States Department of Health and Human Services at a Washington, D.C. ceremony in November. The award was established in 1997 to recognize outstanding accomplishments in achieving permanency for America's children in foster care by states, child welfare agencies, organizations, courts, businesses, individuals, and families.

DCFS nominated several programs and individuals, based on their outcomes and innovation. Family Tree Adoption Connections and One Church One Child were among the winners, along with Maria and Evan Thomas, whom the Adoption Information Center of Illinois nominated. These three afforded Illinois the boast of the multiple awards, more than any other state.

The Family Tree Adoption Connections program supports adoptive families in Vermilion County through an array of services that empower them in a non-threatening and nurturing environment. Through reducing stress and increasing positive interactions within and between adoptive families, the program brings hope and healing to many parents and their children. The program includes a variety of family-oriented activities, such as multi-family outings, parent educational and support groups, parent retreats, family weekend

camp, and activities for adopted youth. Educational support groups bring parents together for presentation by guest speakers, while children participate in their own structured activities.

One Church One Child (OCOC) has been a leader in special needs adoption for 23 years. The program was created in the state of Illinois in 1980 with leadership provided by Father George Clements, along with a group of ministers, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and other governmental officials. To date, it is estimated that over 15,000 Illinois children have been adopted as a direct result of the recruitment and community



Family Tree Adoption Connection's Michael Courtwright, Post Adoption Services Coordinator (left) and Kevin Kegley, Executive Director (middle) traveled to Washington to accept the Adoption Excellence Award. The support program relies on the involvement of parent volunteers like (l to r) Bernadine Spitz, Leslie Holycross and Jennifer Blakeney.

outreach efforts of OCOC. Over 20,000 presentations have been made in churches, schools and programs, and thousands of community members have been made aware of the need to adopt children. Since its inception in Illinois, 38 states and the District of Columbia have formed One



Diane DeLeonardo of DCFS (far left) and Marilyn Panichi of AICI (far right) share the spotlight with the Evan and Maria Thomas. The Thomases have adopted four waiting children: Reuben James, 17, and three related sisters, Beatriz, 15, Julia, 13, and Grace, 12. They also serve as adoption advocates for waiting children.

Church One Child organizations. An estimated 60,000 children have been adopted nationally because of the program.

Maria and Evan Thomas not only exhibit many of the qualities of an ideal adoptive family, but they have also been outspoken advocates for finding loving homes for America's waiting children. They have adopted four waiting children: Reuben James, 17, and three related sisters, Beatriz, 15, Julia, 13, and Grace, 12. The youngsters are thriving in their care due not only to the Thomases' loving support and bright-eyed optimism, but also to their absolute commitment to maintaining sibling bonds. The Thomases also serve as adoption advocates for waiting children and have written various articles regarding adoption. Even the Thomas children are strong adoption advocates and have written articles about the rewards and challenges of being adopted.

Wednesday's Child goes statewide



The Wednesday's Child recruitment program, which features waiting children on NBC5-Chicago's Wednesday 6 p.m. news broadcast, is extending its reach. Now children outside of the Chicago metropolitan area will have an opportunity to go before the station's extensive viewing audience to find permanent families.

Wednesday's Child host and award-winning news anchor, Allison Rosati, takes a special interest in developing a segment that makes each child feel at ease.

"When a child is comfortable, their true personality comes out. From there, it is just a matter of time before everyone else sees how special each child truly is," said Bridgette Glickman, Program Coordinator.

Foster parents also play an important role. Caregivers who are not resources for permanency can still encourage children and help prepare them for their public debut. The Wednesday's Child Family Advocate, Janise Alston, will work through the details with the child and any prospective families during the matching process.

Wednesday's Child will be looking for more youth to feature. Case-workers or adoption specialists can take advantage of this opportunity as they plan for permanency. Contact Glickman at 312-328-2100 for more information.

Illinois celebrates Adoption Day with 62 children joining families



Nearly 50 families had one more reason to give thanks when they crossed the threshold to adoption during National Adoption Day, less than a week before this past Thanksgiving.

A coalition made up of DCFS and several child welfare agencies and advocates pooled their efforts to launch Illinois Celebrates Adoption. Their work culminated on November 21 with an adoption party at the Cook County Court with balloons, clowns, food and a press conference. The children and adults going before the judge



Patrice Hunt couldn't be happier now that she and her husband are "officially" parents to 2-year-old Trinity.

this publication) said to the crowd gathered for the press conference. The James family was invited to offer remarks to illustrate just how much adopting 13-year old Dontae that day meant to them and to encourage more families to consider adoption.

Each of the adopting families had their own joyous story to tell as they took their turn in the courtroom. Even the judges relished in the moment, letting little ones on the bench sound the gavel that pronounced them a family. There were plenty of hugs and tissues to go around as parents and children made promises to stay committed as families forever.

The Illinois Celebrates Adoption Coalition was part of a national effort to raise awareness of the 126,000 children waiting to join permanent families in an adoptive home.



The James family goes home with more than a t-shirt from Nancy Ronquillo, representing the Illinois Celebrates Adoption Coalition. Oreal James, Dontae age 13, and Vanessa James (editor) left the news conference to go before the judge with their petition for adoption.

to make their families official could not contain their smiles with so much excitement in the air.

"This day feels like a wedding and a birthday party all rolled up into one," Vanessa James (editor of

Post-Adoption/ Guardianship Helpful Hints

Using the Medical Card

When a family receives an adoption or guardianship subsidy, one of the benefits is medical insurance from the Illinois Department of Public Aid. This is often familiar ground from foster care, however there are a few differences after permanency.

After the adoption or transfer of guardianship, IDPA mails the medical card to the home once a year, rather than monthly. If the card gets lost, call 800-228-6533 to request a replacement.



If you need to find a dental provider who accepts the Medicaid card for payment, contact Doral Dental at 888-286-2447. When given a zip code, Doral can locate a dental or orthodontia provider in your area.

To find a vision care provider, call IDPA's toll free Kid Care hotline for information on the nearest Medicaid vision care provider. The number is 1-800-226-0768.



What is an adoption or guardianship subsidy?

A subsidy is financial assistance from the department that is provided to the adoptive parent after the adoption is finalized, or to the guardian after guardianship is transferred from the State. This assistance is provided for eligible children with special needs according to the requirements outlined in DCFS Rule 302.310.

The financial assistance available with a subsidized adoption or guardianship can include:

Payment for non-recurring expenses incurred for reasonable and necessary costs and legal fees related to subsidy review, that are directly related to the adoption (up to \$1,500 per child) or transfer of guardianship (up to \$500 per child). However, a private attorney to represent the caregiver is not required at the guardianship hearing.

Monthly payments to be determined through the department and the prospective guardians, based on the needs of the child and the family circumstances. Upon finalization or transfer of guardianship, the family may receive monthly payments up to the applicable licensed foster family home rate.

Medicaid card from the Illinois Department of Public Aid. After adoption or transfer of guardianship, the medical card will be mailed once a year, rather than monthly.

Payment for physical, emotional and mental health needs not payable through insurance or public resources that are associated with or result from a pre-existing condition that has been established prior to the adoption finalization or entry of the final transfer of guardianship.

Employment-related day care payments may be made for children under the age of three if the adoptive parent or guardian is employed or in a training program that will lead to employment. This payment ends on the child's third birthday and cannot be used in addition to therapeutic day care.

Therapeutic day care is available only for children who are determined to have a disability that requires special education services through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or an Individual Family Services Plan (IFSP) and is not fundable through another source.

Your caseworker can help you determine if you are eligible to receive a subsidy for a child in your care. The criteria listed above refer to newly-initiated subsidies. Questions about existing subsidies can be directed to the subsidy worker at DCFS. If you do not know who your DCFS subsidy worker is, call the Post Adoption and Referral Service at 800-572-2390.

Tell it like it is - families speak out

Families, Now and Forever wants to hear the “real deal” on caring for children from those who know best — you!

Here is what you had to say to the question:

What have you done as a caregiver (or what should be done) to encourage visits among siblings while in care and/or after adoption?

“Find another family member or a friend to adopt among siblings. My godmother lives four houses down. I took the two older girls and she took the younger. We combine our holidays and go to events together. When the kids need company they are never alone.”

Bertha Smith

“We were blessed with three beautiful children who are all siblings, and adopted them in January of 2001. While in our care, their biological mother gave birth to two more children (who were also available for adoption). This past year we discovered our children all have a hereditary kidney disease called Al Port Syndrome. Consequently, we contacted their sibling’s adoptive mom so she could be aware of the disease. Since then we have really hit it off. We plan outings to get ice cream, eat at McDonalds, go swimming, and attend each other’s birthday parties. We all feel and know the importance of

knowing one’s siblings. We have become one big happy family.”

Linda and Dennis Warner

“I have always treated my children the way I would want to be treated if I were in their shoes...So you do the same you would with their friends...call, plan and schedule. Only difference is the reward is much greater.”

Kristina Paul

“I guess the best advice I can think of resembles a commercial ad “just do it”. We have six adopted children involving four separate biological families. My two boys spend a weekend every other month at their grandparents. On the alternating month, their siblings come to our house for the weekend. It’s not always convenient, but we think it is important that they stay connected.

We recently adopted a seven-year-old girl from Iowa who has a half sister still living there. We planned our vacation so we could attend her sister’s birthday party. We planned an adoption party in Iowa so she could see her extended (safe) family. We have plans to go back for a long weekend and to have her sister here for a week this summer. And phone calls are a must! We have free cell minutes on weekends, so they have free reign.”

Wendy Engles

“I would ask the social workers if they have been diligent in encouraging these visits. Especially when only one of the foster families is willing to participate.”

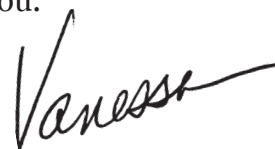
Clarence Roberts

The new question is:

What has an adult (e.g. caseworker, agency, neighbor, family member) done that made it clear they appreciated your contribution as caregiver?

Editor’s Note: *My own mother makes a point to be open and loving to all of our children, regardless of how they joined the family. When we adopted our second son, my father told me he was so proud he almost popped the buttons on his shirt. While they can’t really understand the choices our family makes, they have come to appreciate what we do.*

You can contact me with your response by e-mail at vjames@idcfs.state.il.us or by phone at 312-814-6824. I am looking forward to hearing from you.



Vanessa James, Editor



Illinois Families Now and Forever

Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

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Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change addresses of office locations or request staff copies through the Editor.

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A family for me

Alontae [C7280] Alontae, 14, loves to take things apart to see how they work! His favorite sports are soccer, basketball, and track. He relaxes with pop music and video games, and he's becoming interested in getting to know girls. Alontae is considerate and likes to share with others. His workers said Alontae behaves well in one-on-one situations, and he always tries to do the right thing.

Calvin [C3689] This friendly young man has a variety of sports interests – he especially likes basketball, golf, and tennis. Calvin, 14, loves to draw and color and listen to music, and he enjoys singing. The public library is a favorite destination, where he can check out the latest books. Calvin's foster parent and his teacher said he is friendly and lovable and tries hard to be good. He is very kind and complimentary towards other people, especially those he likes.

Christina [C7334] Christina, 12, loves horses, and is taking horseback riding lessons. She also plans to volunteer at a horse farm and riding school for children with special needs. She is good at entertaining herself, whether it's reading a fantasy book or listening to the latest hip-hop music. Christina loves science. She is especially fascinated by butterflies and other insects. Pizza, hot dogs, and macaroni and cheese are her favorite foods. Her foster parent said Christina is very affectionate and friendly. She has good common sense and shows it in her daily activities.

Marc [C4473] Mark, 11, is a lovable young man with a great smile! His favorite pastimes are playing video games and playing in his neighborhood

park. His worker said Marc enjoys new experiences and puts energy and effort into everything he does.

Porschea, Sherrie, Dimitri, and Terrance [C6854-7] These kids could be called the Fabulous Four!

Porschea (top right) is determined to achieve her goals. Porschea, 13, recently tried out for her school's cheerleading squad. She hopes to become a photographer.

Sherrie (bottom left) is friendly and easy to get along with. Sherrie, 12, is very motivated to work in school. An excellent basketball player, she would love to play for the WNBA.

Dimitri (bottom right) is an affectionate child who loves to build things and take them apart. Dimitri, nine, would like to be a police officer.

Terrance (top left), seven, smiles a lot and has a happy personality. He enjoys playing with toys and watching cartoons. He would like to become a judge.

The children's foster parent said Porschea can be nice and pleasant, and Sherrie is "a wonderful child." Dimitri's teacher said he is a good student and behaves well. Terrance's foster parent said he smiles a lot.

Pricilla [C7335] This bright, engaging young lady is an ace debater! Priscilla, 12, is also very musical, and loves to sing and dance. She has a sweet smile and a warm personality. Priscilla's worker said she has good verbal skills and great leadership potential. Her teacher described her as a good learner.

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.

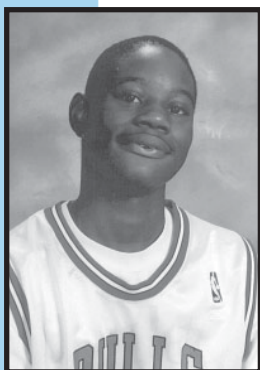
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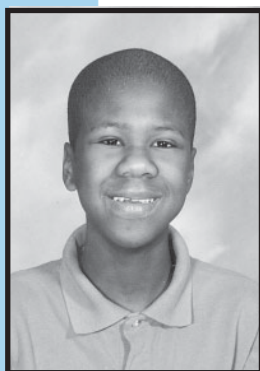
Porschea, Sherrie, Dimitri,
and Terrance (6854-7)



Alontae (7280)

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- Page 1 - Important tax information for caregivers
- Page 3 - Resources to help fund college
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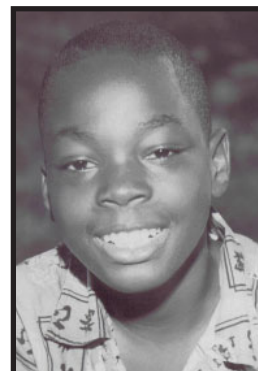
Calvin (3689)



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Marc (4473)

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